

**Review of...PERIURBAN EWELAND Locality,
Mobility and 'Nation': Periurban Colonialism in
Togo's Eweland 1900-1960 by Benjamin N Lawrance**
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PERIURBAN EWELAND *Locality, Mobility and 'Nation': Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland 1900–1960.* By Benjamin N. Lawrance. Rochester NY: Rochester University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv+288. \$75 (isbn 978-1-58046-264-8).

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PERIURBAN EWELAND

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Locality, Mobility and 'Nation': Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland 1900-1960. By BENJAMIN N. LAWRENCE. Rochester NY: Rochester University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 288. \$75 (ISBN 978-1-58046-264-8).

KEY WORDS: Togo, colonialism, nationalism, rural, urban.

Locality, Mobility and 'Nation' makes a distinctive contribution to the growing literature on the Ewe-speaking peoples of West Africa, and develops a framework through which their particular experiences are made relevant to historians of other areas of Africa. Initially colonized by the Germans in the late nineteenth century, the Ewe-speakers were subsequently divided between French- and British-administered zones under the supervision of the League of Nations (later the United Nations), prior to obtaining independence within the states of Ghana and Togo. The peculiar colonial trajectory of this area, along with its gendered and environmental histories, has attracted growing scholarly interest over the past decade.

While Greene and Akyeampong concentrate on the coastal Anlo-Ewe, and Nugent on the Ewe-speakers further inland in the British zone, Lawrence focuses instead on the area that is now the southern quarter of the Francophone Republic of Togo, including the city of Lomé. This book, however, does not merely fill a geographical gap in the existing literature. Lawrence has conducted research in missionary, governmental and private archives in four European and four African countries, as well as conducting numerous interviews in Ghana, Togo and Benin. This material provides the basis for a much more ambitious project which aims to counter elite masculine narratives of colonial nationalism by investigating the modalities of colonial rule and recovering the 'interior architecture' of periurban Eweland. Central to this project is a rejection of crude distinctions between the urban and the rural. Lawrence seeks instead to assess the economic opportunities, social relationships and political projects that were forged by Ewe-speaking men and women across a network of small towns and villages that were drawn into an ever-closer relationship with the city of Lomé. Each chapter recovers a unique episode that draws the reader into the turbulent lives of the people of this zone. Fascinating particulars are thus revealed, but the book is also compelling because the author never loses sight of the project that he defines so clearly in his introduction.

The early part of the book draws out the tensions within French plans for a distinctively republican administration of African territories that were under international supervision. Chapter 2 describes the bizarre procedures by which Ewe-speaking communities were instructed to 'elect' chiefs, with Lawrence noting how French practice differed from earlier German interventions and gave rise to chieftaincy disputes that persist to this day. While administrative theory and procedure are neatly summarized, Lawrence also has an eye for the drama of Ewe responses, and photographic images make striking additions to the text. Chapter 3 pays novel attention to the gendered and spatial dimensions of the 1933 Lomé revolt, with Lawrence demonstrating how the French distinction between the administration of the city and that of the surrounding villages was at odds with socioeconomic imperatives, exciting particular opposition from market women who operated across a periurban zone.

Chapter 4 focuses on the trial of a fetish priest and his assistants who were alleged to have committed cannibalism in the village of Tchékpo-Dévé. While the court records provide an insight into French attitudes towards African religions,

Lawrance's interviews generated the striking assertion that, during the French period, 'one became a juju man in order to become a chief'. Taken together with Nugent's work and an earlier article by Lawrance, this chapter helps to explain why chieftaincy disputes were of a different nature and took a different course among Ewe-speakers on each side of the international border. It is also a valuable corrective to earlier scholarly emphases on Christian conversion and missionary education in Ewe politics.

The later part of the book is concerned with the roles of non-elite men and women in nation-building projects. As Nugent notes on the back cover, Lawrance's study is 'the first detailed history written in English of Togoland under French rule'. The author is thus faced with the challenge of positioning his work against a Francophone literature that may be unfamiliar to non-specialist readers. While Chapter 6 clarifies the tensions between ethnonationalist and territorial nationalist ambitions of the 1950s, specialists may be more interested in Chapter 5, which makes an important contribution to the understudied topic of pro-German sentiment during the 1930s. Those familiar with the Francophone literature will doubtless concur with Lawrance's criticism of its preoccupation with elite coastal men and welcome his attention to movements that emerged further inland in the periurban zone.

This book is likely to stimulate further academic debate in at least two respects. Firstly, Togo is an unusually narrow strip of land, while the coastal city of Lomé was (as Lawrance notes) almost entirely a colonial creation. This makes for a particular spatial dynamic which differs from that of an inland city such as Kano (already surrounded by a close-settled zone in the precolonial period) or Kumasi (the site of intensive property speculation during the twentieth century). Scholars working elsewhere in West Africa will doubtless wish to engage with Lawrance's discussion of periurban colonialism and to consider its different manifestations. Secondly, specialists of the Ewe-speaking area might return to the debate that Nugent initiated around language and identity. Brydon's recent article discusses identity-formation in the inland areas during the later nineteenth century, and Lawrance's earlier work highlights the problematic use of colonial languages in Togo. Meanwhile, historians await a separate study of the use of Mina language, which might aid our understanding of social relationships between the different sub-groups of Togo's coastal zone.

This original, ambitious and well-illustrated book contains much of interest and value for both the specialist and the non-specialist reader. It will surely form an indispensable point of reference for future studies of French colonialism, chieftaincy politics and periurban space in Africa.

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A LONGUE DURÉE RECONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS

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Crafting Identity in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. By ELIZABETH MACGONAGLE.
Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007. Pp. 192. \$75 (ISBN 978-15804-6257-0).

KEY WORDS: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, colonial, ethnicity, identity, precolonial.

Elizabeth MacGonagle has produced a study long awaited by scholars of southeast Africa. *Crafting Identity in Zimbabwe and Mozambique* offers a *longue*